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Amazing defences

One of the world's less convincingly named creatures is the sea hare. These are actually marine molluscs that bear two long projections ("rhinophores") on their heads, giving them a fanciful resemblance to a hare.

Sea hares can be quite large creatures, weighing as much as 2kg. They are soft-bodied herbivores, typically found on seaweed in shallow water. Such a combination of features suggests a quick and easy meal for a hungry predator, so how do sea hares manage to survive?

It turns out that they have an amazing array of defensive tactics. As well as having passive protection, by being well camouflaged through acquiring the colour of the seaweed they feed upon, if they are nevertheless detected and threatened they can take very effective repulsive action. Not only do they have chemicals in their skin and mucus, but if grabbed by a predator they can discharge a cloud of ink.

What does the ink do? A recent article on the BBC Nature News website (<http://goo.gl/IxBrl>, accessed 16 June 2013) reports on the findings of a research

team from Georgia State University, Atlanta, USA. The ink is a mixture of a purple coloured liquid and a white substance called opaline. These are produced in separate glands and released by the sea hare separately or together. The two substances have different functions, and the research team looked particularly at the properties of the opaline.

The team discovered that the sea hare is the first known creature in the world to use sensory inactivation as a means of defence. Common predators of sea hares include crustacea, such as spiny lobsters. These rely on their sensitive antennae to perceive and locate their prey. The opaline, however, is sticky and quickly gums up their



The sea hare *Aplysia californica* discharging its defensive ink. Image: G. Anderson, Wikipedia, under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported licence.

antennae, drastically reducing their effectiveness and forcing them to spend time cleaning them.

Meanwhile the purple ink has a dual action. To some predators, the high concentrations of amino acids in the ink can be very appetising, acting as a decoy. Dr Charles Derby, a member of the research team, was reported as saying, "A lobster, when it bites a sea hare and gets a whiff of the ink, will drop the sea hare and attend to the ink secretion". To other predators, some of the chemicals in the ink, such as aplysioviolins that gives the ink its violet colour, are off-putting and help drive away attackers. Dr Derby continued, "Sea hares have many potential predators, each with feeding habits [and] sensory systems... So, some chemicals may work on some predators and not on others". Hence the use of multiple defences.

This use of an array of effective tactics implies a master tactician: the sea hare must be the result of intelligent design. For how could it possibly have survived for millions of years whilst this necessary array of defences gradually "evolved"? The defences include of course not just the chemicals themselves but the sophisticated means to manufacture and store them, and the ability to control their discharge selectively. All just by mere chance? Nonsense!

Deep insights

Talking of marine creatures, it's worth pointing out another article on the subject of whales and seals. These creatures can dive for very long periods of time - up to one hour in the case of sperm whales or 30



Harbour seals can take a nap as easily deep under water as on the seashore, thanks to their specially designed myoglobin. Image: A. Trepte, Wikipedia, under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.5 Generic licence.

minutes for harbour seals. The latter can even sleep underwater!

Needless to say, these creatures are holding their breath during these times underwater, and to do so for these long periods they have far more oxygen-carrying myoglobin molecules in their muscles than you or I.. But there's a problem: the deeper these creatures go, the higher the water pressure they experience. This high pressure should make the myoglobin molecules become sticky, causing them to aggregate and effectively clog up the animals' ability to utilise the oxygen they carry. And yet they don't. Why?

A research team based at the Institute of Integrative Biology at the University of Liverpool, England, has discovered the answer. According to the BBC News article (<http://goo.gl/F5wGq>, accessed 16 June 2013), the myoglobin in the muscles of the animals that dive the deepest is slightly different from those favouring shallower waters: it is positively charged. As like repels like, the positive charge prevents the myoglobin molecules from developing any problems of clumping. Seals and whales can breathe easily!

Did this just happen this way? As with the many other features of whales which we have covered in past articles, this sounds very much like an example of deliberate design. And there's more...

Sieving: the evidence

Whales hunt a remarkably wide range of prey. The sperm whale, for example, preys on very large squid, whereas humpback and bowhead whales eat huge numbers of tiny fish or crustacea. The latter feeding strategy involves sieving out the prey from the seawater using a series of specialised plates - the baleen.

Such whales may have as many as 300 baleen plates, each of which is composed of three layers of keratin. The two outer layers are smooth, but sandwiched between them is a fibrous layer. The whales rub the ends of their plates with their tongue to expose a fringe of the fibres of this middle layer.



A small portion of the fringed baleen plates of a humpback whale. Image: CSM.

Earlier this year the BBC Nature News website reported on detailed investigations of the baleen plates by Prof. Alexander Werth (<http://goo.gl/xFBo7>, accessed 17 June 2013). He pointed out that although bowheads and humpbacks both feed by sieving, they differ in their speeds of pursuit. Bowheads perform slow surface skims, whereas humpbacks undertake long lunging dives. Consequently the fringes of the baleen filters are four times as long in bowheads as in their humpback cousins.

Prof. Werth took sample baleen plates from bowhead and humpback whales and tested them in a purpose-built flow tank, to see how they behaved in conditions similar to the wild. He found that the baleen is not a static material but highly dynamic, its porosity depending on the force and flow rate of the water moving through the whale's mouth.

In the flow tank the fringes moved dramatically, quickly becoming tangled together, thereby forming an excellent sieve. Furthermore, the flow speed of the water and angle of the baleen had a marked effect on this trapping ability. Plates inside whales' mouths are perpendicular to the flowing water, and Prof. Werth found this to be the most effective position for capturing prey. His work showed that, at the natural swimming speed for bowhead whales, the fringe on a single plate tangled to catch prey. But at faster speeds the hairs simply streamed through the water and the filter was effectively lost.

So these whales just happen to have a filter that is ideally positioned to be most effective and works best at the speeds appropriate to their modes of life? If you see a filter that works very well in a man-made device such as a washing machine or

oil pump, you recognise the hallmarks of deliberate design. Why should it be any different for the whale, excepting only that its Designer is far greater and wiser than mere man?

Phytoplankton show their metal

Still on the subject of marine organisms, a recent report in the *Geophysical Research Letters* (<http://goo.gl/lwNzq> and see also <http://goo.gl/CyBnP>, accessed 17 June 2013) drew attention to the effects on phytoplankton of the eruption of the volcano Eyjafjallajökull in Iceland. The eruption, in April 2010, sent an ash plume several kilometres into the atmosphere, causing considerable disruption to air traffic. The ash was then deposited across up to 570,000 sq km of the North Atlantic Ocean.

Shortly thereafter, amid volcanic activity that lasted five weeks in all, a research team from the National Oceanography Centre, Southampton, UK, arrived on a research vessel in the Iceland Basin. They were able to take a number of surface water

samples for analysis at that time, and also take repeat samples for comparison two months later, after the effects of the ash fall had dissipated.

Phytoplankton are microscopic plants that form a key component of marine food chains. The team had already shown three years earlier that the growth of phytoplankton is limited by the availability of dissolved iron, an essential element for their development. The samples taken by the research team showed that the sudden influx of iron from the volcanic ash caused a shortlived but dramatic increase of 15-20% in the growth of phytoplankton. It was only halted by the organisms reaching their next limiting factor, the availability of nitrates. This sudden growth led to a related spike in the rate of fixation of carbon dioxide by the phytoplankton, significant because of the role of carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas.

All this dramatic but shortlived change occurred because of the eruption of just one volcano. What if there had been many more than one? Geological studies have shown that in the past there have been far bigger eruptions of volcanoes around the world - for example, the supervolcano in Yellowstone National Park, USA, or the Blake River Megacaldera Complex on the Ontario / Quebec border in Canada.

The Bible tells us that in the past, when God judged the world of that time by the Flood, *all* the fountains of the great deep burst forth (Genesis 7: 11). If these contained dissolved minerals then they may have stimulated huge growth of micro-organisms, perhaps helping to explain some of the enormous deposits that still remain nowadays as witnesses to this catastrophic event.



Eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano. Image: H. Thorburn, Wikipedia, under Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported licence.

Pointedly by design

Here's another fascinating example of biomimetics, where research teams look to living organisms for inspiration towards solving engineering problems and developing new products.

Nature Communications has published an article (<http://goo.gl/hfgys> and see also <http://goo.gl/IGB5Z>, accessed 17 June 2013) by a research team led by Dr Jeffrey Karp. Based at Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, USA, the team has developed a super-grip plaster for helping to heal surgical wounds. The plaster is covered with microscopic plastic needles that grip the body's tissues three times more strongly than the materials currently used for burns patients.

Where did the research team find the inspiration for such an effective product? From a humble worm. *Pomphorhynchus laevis*, a parasite of freshwater fishes, anchors itself to the slippery surface of the host intestine using micro-needle tips that pierce the surface and then, once wet, swell to lock tight. The needles thereby cause little damage as they go in, yet achieve maximum grip.

The patch developed by the research team mimics this action. Dr Karp is reported as saying, "The unique design allows the needles to stick to soft tissues with minimal damage to the tissues... Moreover, when it comes time to remove the adhesive, compared to staples, there is less trauma inflicted to the tissues, blood and nerves, as well as a reduced risk of infection".

Isn't it strange that when a research team looks at an organism they see design that is well worth emulating, yet when an evolutionist looks at the same organism he sees only features that developed by blind chance.

A fishy story

Shortly before this issue of the CSM Journal was due to go to press, we were notified of an article appearing in *Science Daily* (<http://goo.gl/dNI0n>, accessed 17 June 2013). Couched in slightly hysterically euphoric terms, the article reports on the discovery of the "miraculously preserved musculature" of a supposedly 380 million-year-old placoderm armoured fish unearthed in the Gogo Formation in north-west Australia. This formation has long been known for its finely preserved fossil fish, including the placoderms, an extinct group that encompasses some of the supposedly earliest jawed fish.

A few years ago an Australian research team discovered that these fossils contained soft tissues, including nerve and muscle cells. Now they have collaborated with several European research groups to document and reconstruct the musculature of the placoderms. Using high-contrast



Illustration of *Dunkleosteus*, a large predatory placoderm fish.
Image: D. Bogdanov, Wikipedia, under Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported licence.

X-ray images, the group has "reconstructed" some fossilised muscles and documented the muscles of the neck and abdomen without damaging or affecting the fossilised remains.

The techniques used to study the placoderm fossil are great science, but notice the *de rigueur* assumptions, which belong far more in the realm of belief than fact. How could such delicate biological structures as nerve and muscle cells survive for millions upon millions of years? Surely what these fossils indicate is that they must be far, far younger than evolutionists want to believe. In which case, there is no time for evolution: placoderms must have been created, not evolved. CSM suspects this logical conclusion will not be appearing in any of the popular media any time soon...

Cuttings & Comments from New Scientist

by Dr David Rosevear

6 April p.11 – Sharpest universe map stems dark flow - for now

“A potential portal to other universes seems to have closed. The sharpest map yet made of light from the infant universe shows no evidence of ‘dark flow’...that hinted at the existence of a multiverse.”

The dark flow linked to the idea of a multiverse was proposed in 2008. Now 175 scientists working on data from the Planck spacecraft say there is no evidence of an infinite number of universes as suggested by the hypothetical inflation field.

These poor theoretical cosmologists have had a rough time of late. They found no evidence of WIMPS in the vicinity of our



The Planck satellite - no evidence to support the existence of a multiverse! Image in the public domain.

galaxy, no cold dark matter, no dark energy, no evidence of an inflation field and now no multiverse. (All this reported recently from *NS* in these columns.) The only certainty they cling to is that in the beginning God *did not* create the heaven and the earth – that would be unscientific.

6 April p.13 – Did meteorites supply life with a vital spark

“The first life on Earth might have acquired its ‘batteries’ from an alien source. Rocks that crashed to Earth could have supplied early organisms with essential molecules that allowed them to store energy, ensuring that they could go on to give rise to all terrestrial life we see today.”

All organisms must produce and store energy to survive. Plants and animals use adenosine triphosphate (ATP) while most microbes use pyrophosphate. These are coupled with sophisticated enzymes in order to function. Terrestrial phosphates

are tied up in minerals in the rocks, so are unavailable. Some have suggested that since meteorites often contain phosphite that dries out to form pyrophosphite that is more reactive than phosphates, no enzyme would be needed. But pyrophosphite reacts with water. [If you are following this argument, dear reader, you deserve a diploma.]

Even if pyrophosphite could have been used in protocells, it would still have been necessary to oxidise it to phosphate (which is possible in the lab.) and design the complex 31 proteins found with the ATP molecule. CSM Pamphlet 323, *Who invented the wheel*, by Bernard Reeves, describes these irreducibly complex ‘batteries’. Outside of the living cell, these improbable molecules break down.

13 April p.5 – Planet hunt grows

The Kepler space telescope has been looking at a single patch of sky since 2009 without finding signs of habitation. Now NASA is planning TESS, a space telescope due for launch in 2017 that will scan the whole sky for planets around nearby stars. It will scan around 2 million of the closest stars hoping to reach 1000 planets in two years **“hopefully including a few with promising atmospheres to scan for life.”** The cost: \$200 million.

13 April p.11 – Stone tools helped shape our hands

“Around 1.7 million years ago, our ancestors’ tools went from basic rocks banged together to chipped hand axes. The strength and dexterity needed to make and use the latter quickly shaped our hands into what they are today – judging by a fossil that belongs to the oldest known anatomically modern hand.”

Leaving aside the ‘millions of years’, what evidence can there be that *Homo erectus* banged rocks together? Broken rocks? Following the dispersal from Babel, folk would not at first have had access to metal ores, so flint tools were used. They showed evidence of skill and strength before genetic mutations became too much of a problem. As to the idea that tool use affected the shape of the users’ hands, it is the genes that do that. The blacksmith’s son isn’t born with muscular arms.

The fossil was **“like modern human metacarpals”**. No evolution there then!

13 April p.42 – Flower child

“What made the first primate evolve the special features that paved the way for human evolution? ...

“The skull was not just that of any old mammal, but of a much sought-after ‘missing link’ in the primate fossil record. Fierce debate still rages over its significance, but many see it as a crucial piece of evidence in the story of how humans came to be – one that suggests flowers played a key role in our evolution.”

Madagascan lemurs regularly tap nectar-rich flowers for food, so it is proposed that primates evolved in tandem with flowering plants.

Squirrels jump about in the trees just like primates, but they eat nuts. We eat nuts rather than daisies. Could we have developed from ... No, surely not!

20 April p.6 - Grow your own replacement parts

Here is some really good science (as opposed to philosophy), where it looks as though we could overcome both the donor organ shortage and the need for long-term immunosuppression of the transplant recipients.

Some researchers are attempting to grow kidneys from scratch with just stem cells. But the procedure that is already benefitting people, by supplying simple organs such as windpipes, uses the recipients own cells to avoid rejection, or drugs to suppress the immune system.

“First take a donor organ and use a mild detergent to wash off all the cells that belonged to the original donor, a process known as decellularisation. What is left is the organ’s underlying structural chassis, or scaffold, made of collagen. Then restore the flesh of the organ by seeding it with cells from the intended transplant recipient until they have colonised the surface, a process called recellularisation. The end product is an organ that shouldn’t be rejected because it is seeded with the recipient’s own tissue.”

The organ could even come from a pig since collagen is a biologically inert protein.

“There is still much work to be done to perfect the organs.”

20 April p.8 - Fossil skin could be a bridge to our past

Two fossil *Australopithecus sediba* skeletons have been unearthed that are thought to have remnants of skin on their bones. This would be exciting because the only skin samples known until now have been from natural and man-made mummies. The usual claim is made that **“*A. seiba* is a pivotal species that may bridge the gap between the ape-like australopiths and the first members of our own genus.”**

Unlike a human foot, each foot of these fossils is “much more flexible, making it perfect for gripping tree trunks and branches”

Workers hope to use the skin, if it is in fact skin – they’re not sure - to learn if our ancestors were hairy, how long their hair

might have been and of what colour (seriously). Did the skin contain sweat glands? It is reported that if these ‘ancestors’ had lost their body hair and gained sweat glands, then it would have helped them to cope with the extra heat generated as they grew large human brains.

“Ancient skin could settle the issue of exactly when our ancestors became smooth and sweaty.”

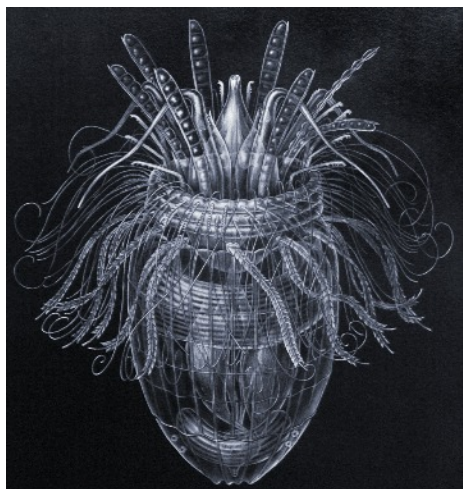
Unless, of course, they weren’t our ancestors.

27 April p.36 Life in the Abyss

“In fact we now know that the depths of Earth’s crust harbour isolated ecosystems whose inhabitants defy many established biological rules. There are microbes that metabolise so slowly they may be millions of years old; bacteria that survive without benefitting from the sun’s energy; and animals that do what no animal should – live their entire lives without oxygen. This strange menagerie might give us insights into where life originated and where it is heading. It may even help our search for life on other worlds.”

Bacteria and even half-a-millimetre-long nematode worms have been discovered in watery crannies in the deepest gold mines in South Africa, 3.6 km below ground. They get their energy from the uranium decay product hydrogen that combines with sulphate minerals in the rocks. With little or no organic matter about, their metabolism is so sluggish that it is hard to determine that creatures such as Loricifera are alive.

The Lord says He made the Earth to be inhabited (Isaiah 45:18). It seems that He created life forms to suit every remote ecosystem, whether in the depths of the mid-ocean trench or miles beneath the ground. The Lord is not constrained by



Drawing of *Pliciloricus enigmatus*, a species of the bizarre group Loricifera., which have been found in deep mines. Image in the public domain.

‘established biological rules’, nor by ‘what no animal should do’! He has told us in His Word ‘where life originated and where it is heading’. In Him was life (John 1:4).

12 May p.10 – The mother tongue of Eurasia

“Seven families of languages across the Eurasian continent, containing tongues as diverse as modern Inuit, Tamil, Japanese, Greek and Hungarian evolved from a single language that existed about the time of the last ice age... English, Swedish and Farsi are all part of the Indo-European language family.”

Researchers seek for words in different languages with the same meaning and a similar sound – e.g. brother, bhrater (Sanskrit), frater, frère. Frequently used words such as I, mother, hand and fire change with time more slowly than less common words.

It would appear that after the Flood, at the time of the Tower of Babel, the Lord God confused the language of the descendants of Noah. The ice age possibly came when

waters above the atmosphere (Genesis 1) condensed at the Flood, allowing heat to be radiated more readily from the Earth. Solar radiation is weak at the Poles. The oceans that had become very warm due to earthquakes (fountains of the deep) gave off much water vapour that condensed at the Poles. Ice flowed out towards the lower latitudes giving an ice age that probably lasted hundreds of years (witness the frequent famines mentioned in Genesis). The close of the ice age was followed by an expansion of the population, so that the different languages were further modified as families became isolated from one another. The 15,000 year time-scale mentioned in the article is an estimate!

11 May p.32 – Chasing shadows

This appropriately named article is yet another one about so-called dark energy.

“It is 15 head-scratching years since we noticed that some mysterious agent is pushing the universe apart. We still don’t know what it is. It is everywhere and we can’t see it. It makes up more than two-thirds of the universe, but we have no idea where it comes from or what it is made of.”

The remainder of this 4-page cover story speculates on these questions. However, if the scientists went back to Newton’s and Ussher’s much derided 6-thousand-year-old universe, these shadows would melt away. Geologists could fit their catastrophic earth movements (mainly the Flood) into such an historic period, while astronomers could consider a decrease with time of the speed of light with its related units.

11 May p.40 – Our Asian origins

The orthodox human evolution story opines that we developed from southern apes (*Australopithicus*) before migrating out of

Africa. Now, some anthropologists are suggesting that a few of these apes migrated to Asia where some became *Homo erectus* and then *H. Sapiens*, while others evolved into ‘Hobbits’.

Hobbits, you may recall, were fossils of metre-tall primates unearthed in the Indonesian island of Flores in 2003. Their brain capacity was estimated at only 420 cubic centimetres, and their age at only 18,000 years. The remains were associated with stone tools. At the time it was conjectured these hobbits were a diminutive race of humans with a pathological brain disorder. One expert quoted here thinks the whole idea of humans evolving in Asia is untenable.

“There is not a scrap of fossil evidence to support this idea.”

“However, the African fossil record is also surprisingly silent on the origin of *H. erectus*. ‘There’s a difficult gap between 2 and 3 million years ago in East Africa where the material is incredibly fragmentary’”.

What a tangled web we weave when once we choose to ignore the biblical story of Creation and history found in the Bible!



Liang Bua cave, Flores, Indonesia, where fossils of the “hobbit” were discovered. Image: Rosino, Wikipedia, under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic licence.

18 May p.9 – Human stem cells made by Dolly cloning technique

Scientists at the Oregon National Primate Research Centre have stripped the chromosomes from a human egg and inserted a patient’s skin cell (having his own DNA to prevent immune rejection). The resulting cell is cultured to produce several human stem cells that can be used to grow into whatever tissue the patient needs. This method is very efficient. The recently developed induced pluripotent stem cells (IPS cells) that require no human eggs are more prone to develop mutations than this Dolly-like scheme. **“However, it still boils down to needing to get human eggs.”**

18 May p.14 – Early ancestors had shoddy hearing

The early ancestors here are extinct southern apes *Australopithicus africanus*. Ancestry for these knuckle walkers is a big assumption. Fossil bones from their middle ears indicate that they lacked sensitivity to the mid-range frequencies that we use for speech. A more precise heading for this article would be: Extinct apes did not possess spoken language.

18 May p.36 – Consciousness

This interesting 12 page collection of articles can’t make out how our distinct consciousness evolved. **“There are a lot of hard problems in the world, but only one of them gets to call itself ‘the hard problem’. And that is the problem of consciousness – how a kilogram or so of nerve cells conjures up the seamless kaleidoscope of sensations, thoughts, memories and emotions that occupy every waking moment.”**

A study of brain scans of people who are under a general anaesthetic or are in a vegetative state show that activity is focused on three areas. These are the thalamus in the very heart of the brain, the pre-frontal cortex behind the forehead and the posterior parietal cortex at the rear/top of the head. These areas are strongly connected to one another by nerves, and the cortices are associated with complex thoughts. The writer of this section, a cognitive neuro-scientist, supposes that by chipping away at pieces of the problem, **“we will eventually find there is no hard problem left at all.”**

It seems to this reviewer that the nerves and the areas of the brain are the hardware, whereas consciousness is the software of that indefinable entity, the soul.

Our self-awareness is much more marked than that of the animals, and the next article wonders if humans are fundamentally different from the beasts in this respect. In the Garden of Eden, our parents discovered the knowledge of good and evil, and became conscious of their nakedness. We call the awareness of sin our ‘conscience’.

Another aspect of consciousness discussed is the unconscious mind. Brain scans show that our brains start whirring many seconds before we know we were coming to a decision. We unconsciously process information that helps us to make a decision. One expert **“reckons that unconscious deliberation can also explain those ‘a-ha’ moments when the answer to a problem seems to come from nowhere, as well as times when a searched for word comes to mind only after we stop trying.”** We need to sleep on some difficulties.

Another section of this collection of articles asks: **“What is the function of consciousness? Why did it evolve? ... My guess is that consciousness, because**

of its complexity and costliness, in fact conferred adaptive value on its possessors, but I can’t think of any way to prove it.”

Under the sub-heading **I, robot**, we read **“We will only understand consciousness once we can give it to machines.”**

I guess that consciousness will remain for scientists ‘the hard problem’.

25 May p.16 - Tides are pushing the moon away faster

“Earth is shoving the moon away faster now than it has done for most of the past 50 million years, says a new model for the way tides influence the lunar orbit. The result helps solve a mystery concerning the moon’s age that has long vexed astronomers.”

Our twice daily tides slow the Earth’s spin on its axis, and cause the moon’s orbit to expand at the rate of about 3.8 centimetres a year. This limits the time since the moon was close to the Earth - at the Roche limit



The continual stirring of the tides oxygenates water and brings nutrients nearer the surface - a design feature of our planned planet. Image: CSM.

where gravity would tear these bodies apart - and the present i.e. 1.5 billion years rather than the 4.5 by reckoned for the age of some lunar rocks. The recession should have been even faster in the past.

The new theory claims that 50 my ago, the North Atlantic was too narrow for tidal waves to slosh across, so the separation rate was slower.

Dating of rocks involves big assumptions. If the heavens and Earth are only some 6,000 years old, the problem disappears.

1 June p.7 - Ephemeral planet

This piece and the following item on the same page are about things lost and found: **“Last year astronomers announced the discovery of an Earth-mass planet just 4.3 light years away in the nearby Alpha Centauri system. Now a second look suggests the planet may not be there after all.”** Evidently, the thought of a nearby planet possibly able to support life caused the searchers to rush into publishing without taking a second look! The evidence was a perceived dip in the light as the phantom planet appeared to move in front of its star.

1 June p.7 - Lunar lost and found

More than 60 years ago, the Apollo 11 space mission brought back samples of dust collected by Armstrong and Aldrin on the surface of the moon. Some vials were sent to the University of California,

Berkeley for analysis of its carbon compounds. Just now, 20 vials of lunar dust, gathered at such expense, have been found untouched, gathering more dust in a warehouse. Of course, if they had found the slightest evidence of former biological molecules, they would not have been quietly stored away.

8 June p.8 - Humanity's earliest cousin
“A fossil unveiled this week might give us an idea of what this crucial ancestor looked like. It is the earliest primate skeleton ever found. It also strongly suggests that our lineage evolved in Asia, several million years earlier than we thought...”

The fossil was unearthed in China, and is dated at 55 million years BP. Having small eyes, it may have been active in the daytime. It had the sharp molar teeth of an insect eater. Its feet tell us that it swung from the trees. There is uncertainty as to whether it was in the line of tarsiers or monkeys. Possibly these early creatures moved from China to Africa **“around 40 million years ago”**, evolved into humans, and came out of Africa again to take over the world. Just So!

Quote

“To believe that organisms can be improved by mutations is to believe that printing errors will enhance Shakespeare's plays.”

Silvio Famularo

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